

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 9, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

We write to commend the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) for their bold Draft Proposed 2019-2024 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil & Natural Gas Leasing Program (DPP), which would study 47 potential lease sales across 25 of the 26 OCS planning areas. A robust, science-driven review of our nation's offshore oil and natural gas resources is necessary and appropriate to inform future decisions on ensuring America's energy security and economic prosperity, while sending a clear signal to the world that the United States is prepared to responsibly explore and develop our resources to achieve these goals.

The Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) establishes a clear, deliberative and inclusive process by which offshore leasing decisions are made. This includes multiple public comment periods and public meetings across the coastal states. Developing an offshore program takes place concurrently with the Environmental Impact Statement process in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), ensuring rigorous scientific review. This process is designed to engender trust and confidence in all stakeholders.

It is important to note that inclusion of a given area in the DPP does not mean it will necessarily be offered in a lease sale; but rather ensures only that an area will be scientifically evaluated to inform future leasing decisions as the program development process continues.

By following the science-driven, deliberative and inclusive OCSLA and NEPA processes by which our national offshore leasing policy is crafted, the Department will undertake a responsible effort to better understand our future energy options. The stakes for national and economic security are too high to do any less.

Both the U.S. Energy Information Administration and the International Energy Agency forecast that oil and natural gas will continue to meet roughly 75% of U.S. and global energy demand in 2040. We are far better off producing these resources domestically than importing them from

foreign nations, many of which do not share our interests or values. In recent years, the U.S. has become the world's largest producer of oil and natural gas, and in so doing has created millions of jobs, billions of dollars in state and federal revenue, and downward pressure on prices to the benefit of consumers. But only a lasting commitment to expanding domestic oil and natural gas production – including offshore exploration and development – will provide long-term energy security.

As you continue your evaluation of offshore leasing policy to meet those security needs, we strongly encourage that your stakeholder consultations reflect that these federal offshore resources belong to all Americans. Consultation with coastal Governors and stakeholders is obviously appropriate; just as consultation with Governors and stakeholders from all states is appropriate to evaluate federal leasing policies impacting national resources.

It is also important to note the decades of practical experience of oil and gas operations in U.S. Waters which clearly demonstrate the compatibility between these activities and other ocean uses, including military training, tourism, and commercial and recreational fishing – all of which thrive cooperatively. For example, Gulf of Mexico leases routinely contain stipulations requiring special accommodations to military operations, including the right of the military to suspend oil and gas operations, require evacuation of personnel, and require a formal Operating Agreement between the lessee and the military.

In closing, we support the science-driven public process being undertaken to construct a new 2019-2024 offshore leasing program, and feel a robust, national offshore leasing program is necessary to bolster America's energy security and create needed jobs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul A. Gosar".

Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Henry Cuellar".

Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Scalise".

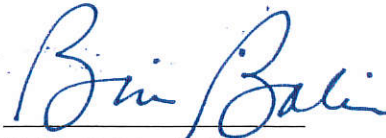
Steve Scalise
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ralph Abraham".

Ralph Abraham, MD
Member of Congress



Rick W. Allen
Member of Congress



Brian Babin, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



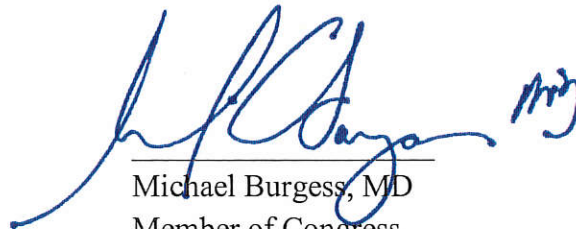
Andy Biggs
Member of Congress



Marsha Blackburn
Member of Congress



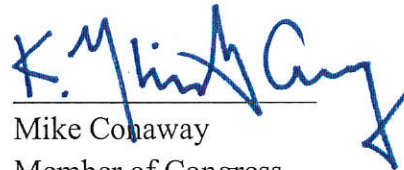
Dave Brat
Member of Congress



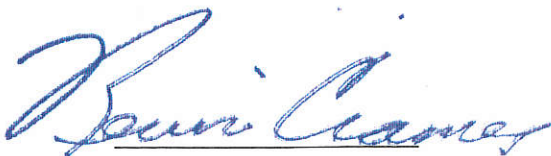
Michael Burgess, MD
Member of Congress



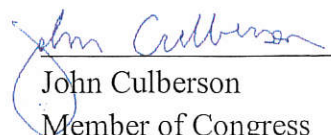
Tom Cole
Member of Congress




Mike Conaway
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Kevin Cramer
Member of Congress



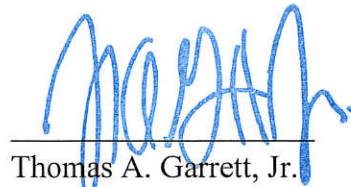
John Culberson
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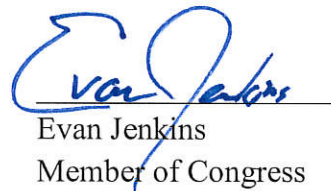
Brett Guthrie
Member of Congress



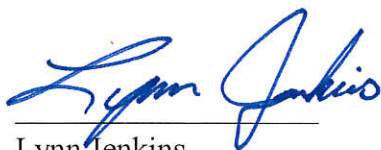
Jody Hice
Member of Congress



Richard Hudson
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Evan Jenkins
Member of Congress



Lynn Jenkins
Member of Congress



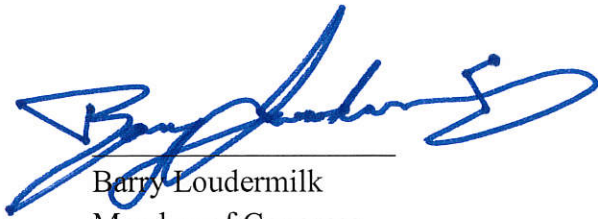
Mike Johnson
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David B. McKinley, P.E.
Member of Congress



Paul Mitchell
Member of Congress



Pete Olson
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Stevan Pearce
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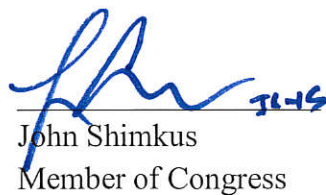
Scott Perry
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Collin Peterson
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John Shimkus
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Glenn "GT" Thompson
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Marc Veasey
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Bruce Westerman
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